

Where Should the Bible be Opened?

By WB Aurelio L. Corcuera, PM (4)

At a Lodge of Instruction conducted by the Senior Grand Lecturer, the question came up as to where the Bible should be opened in the three Degrees. The question was answered by saying that in our jurisdiction the Bible is opened in the First Degree at Psalms 133:1-3; in the Second Degree at 1 Corinthians 13:1-7,13; and in the Third Degree at Ecclesiastes 12:1-7. This is to conform to the perambulations. A Brother said that in the Second Degree the Bible should be opened at Amos 7:7-8, citing as authority the statement in the book *The Man A Mason* by P.G.M. Mauro Baradi. The Brother on January 15, 1967, in a letter addressed to the Senior Grand Lecturer asks "if we should follow the instruction on the Masonic Bible sold by the Grand Lodge of the Philippines?" He quotes the answer given to question No. 10, which says "in this country (the United States) most of the Lodges have adopted the usage of opening the Bible at a proper place. In the Second Degree the passage adopted is Amos 7:7-8,..."

The whole question reduces to this: What is prescribed in the Ritual of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines? Masons should keep in mind that what a Grand Lodge, in the exercise of its sovereign power, adopts as its Ritual is correct for the Lodges and Brethren within its jurisdiction and should be followed.

In connection with the Bible on the Altar the important thing is that it be opened when the Lodge is opened and closed when the Lodge is closed. The particular passage at which it should be opened is immaterial. This is borne out by the fact that there are a number of Grand Jurisdictions which do not prescribe where the Bible should be opened. In the United States there was no uniform practice until the publication in 1797 of the *Freemasons' Monitor* by Thomas Smith Webb (1771-1819). In those jurisdictions which follow Webb's *Monitor* the Bible is opened in the First Degree at Psalms 133:1-3; in the Second Degree at Amos 7:7-8; and in the Third Degree at Ecclesiastes 12:1-7.

When the Grand Lodge of the Philippines was organized on December 19, 1912, it adopted the Ritual of the Grand Lodge of California. The first Grand Lecturer, Bro. Newton C. Comfort, who became the second Grand Master (1914), went to California in Order to be sure that what he taught was the real California Ritual. The *Monitor*, containing the esoteric work, as prepared by him was approved at the Annual Communication in 1914 and ordered printed. Until the publication of the Ritual in cipher in 1927, the *Monitor* was the only book allowed, the esoteric work had to be learned from mouth to ear.

The Biblical passage used in the Second Degree is precisely what is used in California, namely, 1 Corinthians 13:1-7,13. For all Lodges under the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, this and not Amos 7:7-8, is the one to be used in opening the Bible in the Second Degree.